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The Maine Development Commission: Its Scope and Work, 1927

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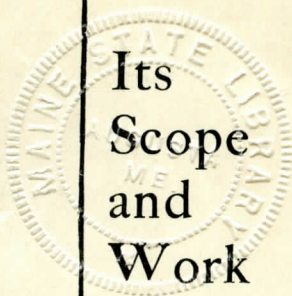
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The *Maine* Development Commission



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ADDRESS

by

CLARENCE C. STETSON, Chairman

of the

Maine Development Commission

before

Lewiston-Auburn Rotary Club

October 14, 1927

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The Maine Development Commission— Its Scope and Work

Maine has always been outstanding for leadership among the other states of the Union. Its motto upon the State shield,—“Dirigo,”—is a visual evidence of this,—an inspiration for her citizens.

Today Maine is again outstanding in her leadership among the States which are concentrating their efforts on agricultural, industrial, recreational and social development and it is my purpose to tell something of the latest step which has been taken by our State in this direction. I speak of the Maine Development Commission, which is the culmination of the efforts of the past few years made under the able direction of our Governor for the better coordination of the various lines of endeavor interested in the development of Maine.

In the 82nd Legislature an appropriation of \$25,000 was set off for the collection, publication and dissemination of data relative to the resources of the State, the expenditure of which, as I have stated, was in the hands of the Governor and Council. During those two years the ground work of progressive recreational advertising was laid and expanded.

Publications under this appropriation were:

Land of Remembered Vacations.
Maine by Motor.
Maine Fishing.
Farming Opportunities in Maine.
Help Yourself by Helping Maine.
Maine Invites You.
Why Maine Is Going to Springfield.
Opportunities in Maine.
Facts about Maine.
The Awakening of Maine.
Maine Farmers Make Good.
Hardwood Opportunities in Maine.
Maine Hardwoods.
besides poster charts, automobile route maps,
etc.

(4)

By an act of the last Maine Legislature, the Maine Development Commission was created:

Its membership to consist of five permanent officials of the State Government,—the Secretary of State, the Commissioners of Agriculture, Forestry, Inland Fish and Game and Labor,—and six private or non-official citizens who serve without pay, these latter to be appointed by the Governor and Council.

Its purpose, the collection, publication and dissemination of data relative to the resources of the State.

The amount of money placed at its disposal, \$50,000 annually for the next two fiscal years, hardly a sufficient sum given the enormity of the task and especially when compared with amounts appropriated by other agencies in other localities engaged in similar undertakings.

I am now going to take up in some detail the three phases of the law to which I have just referred.

First, the composition of the Commission. The five officials of the State Government were made members of the Commission to add to its official standing and to create for the Commission a permanent contact between the Commission and the public for obtaining data relative to the important activities of the State.

The six private citizens were placed upon the Commission to ensure against the Commission's becoming a political organization, for the private citizens constitute a majority of the membership, and it was wisely recognized by the Legislature that the work of the Commission to be successful must be non-political.

In selecting the six citizen members of the Commission attention was given by the Governor and Council to geographic location and diversification of the interests which they represented. The private personnel of the Commission is:

John E. Abbott of So. Berwick, Master of the State Grange;
Charles Ault, of Auburn, Shoe Manufacturer;
Lewis S. Bean of Presque Isle, Automobiles and Potatoes;

(5)

Hiram W. Ricker of Poland Spring, Hotel man and always a sincere and active public servant;

George F. West of Portland, President of the State Chamber of Commerce;

Clarence C. Stetson, President of the Bangor Chamber of Commerce.

Second, I will treat of the work of the Commission. This phase I shall subdivide into work already done, work in process, work contemplated.

Work Accomplished

The Commission only began its actual functions as an official unit about the middle of July last, although from the date of the passage of the law in April it acted in an unofficial advisory capacity to the Governor and Council in the conduct of this year's Recreational Advertising program, which was pursued with as much vigor as formerly and I think I can safely say with increased benefit to the State over former years.

The Commission is firmly convinced of the value to the State of recreational advertising and of the recreational industry. This conviction is based on the fact that an endeavor or pursuit which amounted in 1926, on a conservative estimate, to \$100,000,000, which estimate can be said to have shown in 1927 a 10% increase over 1926, is worthy of the most serious consideration, especially when it is realized that every cent of this tourist money is new money brought into our State and circulated among every class of our citizens, the banks, the retailer, the farmer, the laborer, and not alone among the hotel keepers and those engaged in different lines of transportation, as is so frequently misstated.

In this connection it may interest you to know that as a result of a careful survey it is estimated that from 25% to 27% of the gross receipts of our hotels and camps is paid for the one item of labor, which proves that even those much maligned hotel men who are seeking only to line their own pocket books do share some of their ill gotten gains with the other workers of the state.

Another reason for the conviction of the Commission regarding recreation is the fact that better results along the other lines of State development can be obtained once personal contact has been secured. In a word, bring the outsider into Maine on the appeal of the pleasure of enjoying the recreational pursuits which our climate, scenery and other natural advantages offer, and once here, with the personal contact established, endeavor to interest him in the other phases of our State life so that he will perhaps invest in our enterprises, perhaps establish new enterprises, perhaps take up his residence here,—all of which will tend to increase our taxable property and hence spread the tax burden.

I hope that this statement will convince any of those who formerly have been critical of our recreational advertising program that it has been productive and is worth while.

Advertising Season Extended

In the recreational advertising of this year, the Commission after consultation with its Advisory Advertising Committee made a change in policy. It decreased the number of papers employed and concentrated with larger space in the papers which were most productive of results in number of inquiries received,—stressing in these advertisements not only our recreational features but also the industrial, agricultural, educational and health reasons as to why Maine is a good place to work, to play and to live.

For the first time, under direction of the Commission, the recreational advertising was extended from the spring and early summer into the autumn months. This advertising which stressed our autumnal attractions, was done in an attempt to lengthen the tourist season and increase our \$100,000,000 income from this source. This is a new phase and results will consequently be slow, for there are many factors to be met. However, reports which I have personally received from the hotels in various parts of the State to the effect that September 1927 was above September 1926 would indicate that some benefit has already resulted from this new campaign.

Advisory Committees

I have just spoken of the Advisory Advertising Committee. This is one of several similar Committees which the Commission has appointed to act as its mentors and guides in the different lines of endeavor of which it is making a study. In addition to the Advertising Committee, Advisory Committees on Industry and on Agriculture have already been named and others will be created as the work of the Commission broadens.

Field Meetings

To further assist it in its labors and to explain to the people of the State the purpose of its work, the Commission is holding throughout the State a series of field meetings. These meetings are proving most profitable to the Commission as at them representatives of various groups and lines of endeavor are appearing and making most helpful and constructive suggestions on a wide range of subjects. This will be of the utmost value to the Commission in formulating its program for the coming year.

The Commission has not devoted all its efforts to Recreation for among the works already completed is a pamphlet on Apple Growing in Maine, prepared under the cooperating direction of our State Department of Agriculture and the University of Maine.

Work in Process

I have spoken earlier of the work in process and of the fact that the Commission was not devoting its energies alone to Recreation.

One of the important works now under way is a comprehensive book on Agriculture in Maine. This is being prepared in readable, attractive form, containing some finely colored illustrations and having concise comprehensive articles by leaders in the different divisions of agriculture. It will, when completed, be a credit to our State.

The State Survey

Probably the most important work now in process by the Commission is a survey of the

industrial, agricultural, recreational and social assets of our State,—a necessary taking account of stock in order to have an accurate basis upon which to build our whole development and advertising program.

The Commission has been most fortunate in obtaining Mr. Paul L. Bean of Lewiston as engineer in charge of the Survey. Mr. Bean has generously volunteered his services without expectation of remuneration or reward except the satisfaction of rendering to his State an invaluable contribution,—a fine example of public service.

In this work, Mr. Bean and the members of the Commission are going to call on small groups from each line of endeavor in the actual and potential agricultural, industrial, recreational and social activities of our state to cooperate with the various Departments of our State Government; the Universities of the State, the New England Council and the United States Department of Commerce in the collection and the analyzation of relevant data so that it may be determined which of these activities are worth saving, which are capable of expansion, what new ones can be successfully launched and what methods can best be employed to effect these ends.

In view of the fact that Mr. Bean and the Commission members are giving willingly of their time and service it is an assured fact that the leaders in the different lines of agriculture, industry, recreation and social work will respond to this plan and give equally freely of their time and brains. As proof of this one has but to turn to the fine cooperation already being given by the Associated Industries of Maine.

What Is to Be Gained by the Survey?

This survey should prove to be a great inspirational movement throughout the State, bring confidence to our citizens and serve as a sound basis for an educational campaign on the many advantages our State has to offer. This educational campaign must be conducted vigor-

ously without the State but most important of all, it must be conducted most vigorously within our state and especially within our colleges and schools so that our young people whom we wish to keep within our borders will see reasons why they should want to stay in Maine.

The State survey should also furnish inspiration to the individual communities to follow a similar procedure of survey, for the State Commission will be glad to assist each city or town in laying out a plan for the taking account of community assets. If this offer of the Commission is generally accepted Maine communities will all have been measured by a similar yard stick, obviously a very real step in State development. It is sincerely hoped that each community will take advantage of the offer and will follow the example set by the State, for it will be of material assistance to the State in its more general program.

Another phase that the survey will bring out is that industry is vitally interested in and inter-related with agriculture and vice versa. Why is that? Let me give but one answer to this question. Prosperity in industry means larger pay rolls, larger pay rolls mean increase in purchasing power for agricultural products. On the other hand prosperous farmers mean increased purchasing power for our industrial output.

And yet another phase that the survey will bring out is that our education and health problems are the problems of our industrialists and agriculturists. You ask why this is? The answer is that the better educated and the healthier is labor in agriculture and industry, the more efficient is labor and the better the quality of its product. Quality products, efficiently produced cannot but be of great assistance in meeting competition from similar products made in other localities where types of labor are lower than those with which we are favored in Maine.

With facts and data practically collected and analyzed by the best minds of the State it is the hope of the Commission that it may be a factor in making to our Legislature and to our transportation companies constructive suggestions on

taxation and transportation that will be of assistance to all lines of endeavor in increasing their prosperity and their power to compete more effectively.

Many of you in the audience are industrialists. I hope I have shown to you some reasons both of state pride and possible personal pecuniary benefit why you should get behind this inspirational and educational movement which the Commission hopes will be of great benefit to the State.

Contemplated Work

In planning its future work, it is the conviction of the Commission that we of Maine should first make our own people contented, happy and prosperous. With that accomplished, there will be no difficulty in getting others to come within our borders to enjoy our prosperity and to share our taxes.

With this thought always in mind they intend to progress slowly and they hope soundly during the next year.

In November the Advisory Advertising Committee will be called in to formulate next year's advertising program. It is contemplated making radical changes in the form of copy and especially in the type of literature to be put out,—the booklets to be changed from railroad folder type to small pamphlets, so artistic and yet practical in character that they will stand head and shoulders above similar literature in other states, and will rest on the parlor or library table instead of finding an early waste-basket grave. A very simple but splendid book along these lines on "Autumn in Maine" for use next year is already being set up.

The Commission has taken off its coat and rolled up its sleeves and stands ready in its volunteer and uncompensated capacity to use every effort to make this development program a success.

The possibilities are great, but it is only through complete cooperation from every group of citizens that the maximum of success can be obtained. Constructive suggestions and criti-

cism are welcomed. Patience is asked. The problem is big and big things, if they move soundly, move slowly especially if they are hampered and this Commission is today and will tomorrow be hampered by the limitation of its finances.

This is your State and your Commission and the completeness of its success depends upon your entire cooperation, optimism and individual efforts to put this work across.